

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
2 October 1966

NSA review completed

ARMY review(s) completed.

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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administrative affairs recently told the press that village elections will be held in government controlled areas early next year (Para. 6).

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: North Vietnam continues to attack the upcoming Manila Conference (Para. 1).

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Czech support for North Vietnam's policy toward the war was stated in the joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of Premier Lenart's six-day visit to Hanoi (Paras. 8-10). Hanoi's warm treatment of Communist China's National Day, matched against the Czech-DRV communiqué shows North Vietnam at its best in straddling the Sino-Soviet dispute (Paras. 11-13). Peking restated its support for North Vietnam in the usual terms on its National Day (Para. 14).

2 October 1966

25X1



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US combat forces participated in 14 of 33 ground operations of battalion size or larger conducted in South Vietnam during the period 1-2 October.

2. The heaviest fighting of the weekend occurred in coastal Binh Dinh Province where elements of the US 1st Air Cavalry on 1 October engaged an estimated 300 Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army troops during the opening phase of Operation IRVING approximately 31 miles north of Qui Nhon. In the three-hour battle that ensued, 110 Communist troops were killed and six captured, as against US casualties of three killed and three wounded.

3. Operation IRVING was initiated on 1 October in the Phu Cat Mountain area of Binh Dinh Province. It is a large, combined search-and-clear operation with five US, four Korean, and four ARVN battalions participating. Operation THAYER, a search-and-destroy operation initiated by the US 1st Air Cavalry Division on 12 September in the same general area, has been temporarily suspended to permit assignment of its four participating battalions to Operation IRVING.

4. In northernmost Quang Tri Province, US Marine task force elements continued to press Operation PRAIRIE against elements of the 324B North Vietnamese Army Division just south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). However, no major engagements were reported. Cumulative Communist casualties in the two-month-old Marine offensive currently stand at 943 killed, in contrast to American losses of 132 killed, 523 wounded, and one missing.

5. Shortly after midnight on 2 October, a South Vietnamese Navy Landing Craft (LCM), supporting Operation BATON ROUGE was sunk by a Viet Cong

2 October 1966

I-1

25X1

command-detonated mine. The incident occurred about 16 miles south-southeast of Saigon on the Long Tau River (but not in the main channel which serves the Saigon port). Of those aboard the LCM, ten US and five South Vietnamese were wounded and three US are missing.

Viet Cong Military Tactics in Ninh Thuan Province

6. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] continuous defeats in large-scale military operations and the superior strength and firepower of allied/GVN forces have forced Viet Cong military forces in Ninh Thuan Province to adopt a more defensive military stance. They reportedly have been ordered to avoid large-scale engagements whenever possible and stick to guerilla-type warfare. They are to retreat immediately following an action, apparently to avoid excessive casualties.

7. [REDACTED]

Viet Cong forces in secret base areas in Ninh Thuan are no longer concentrated in battalion or regimental strength, but rather are divided into squads, platoons, and companies which are dispersed to avoid air strikes. The Viet Cong are also reportedly transferring their secret base area installations from mountainous regions to lower, more thickly forested spots, again in an effort to avoid air strikes.

Viet Cong "Fall-Winter Campaign" in Quang Nam and Quang Tin Provinces

8. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] has provided information on alleged Viet Cong offensive plans in Quang Nam and Quang Tin provinces during the 1966 rainy season. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] a meeting was held on 4-5 September 1966 in a secure area of Quang Nam Province to discuss the upcoming offensive plans. The strategy is based on the principles set forth in "General Policy Directive 12," an order reportedly issued by North Vietnamese Army General Vo Nguyen Giap as a result of a decision of the Lao Dong Party central committee in Hanoi.

2 October 1966

I-2

25X1

9. The plan calls for the main offensive to be delivered in southern Quang Nam, south of the Thu Bon River, and in northern Quang Tin provinces. It was pointed out that the fall rains in the area will help neutralize US air power. The tactics will emphasize intensified guerrilla activity in the rear areas of allied forces. Scattered attacks will be made on outposts, particularly those manned by GVN local troops and paramilitary forces, whose morale and combat effectiveness are considered inferior.

10. US military posts in the area, including the US Marine complex at Chu Lai, will also be attacked, both for psychological reasons and to pin down the forces stationed there, thus preventing their deployment elsewhere in a mobile reaction capacity. Relief forces attempting to reinforce outposts under siege are among principal friendly elements targeted for ambush operations.

11. The secondary theater of operations will be in northern Quang Nam Province, especially in the area around Da Nang city and Da Nang Air Base. As a preliminary objective, the Viet Cong hope to gain possession of the rice harvest in this rich rice-growing area. Prior to the opening of the military offensive in northern Quang Nam, Viet Cong forces will assume an essentially passive stance. Action in the secondary theater will feature the shelling or ground harassment of US artillery bases and GVN concentrations in the area.

12. A possible tactical innovation outlined in "General Directive 12" for inclusion in the over-all strategy of the "Fall-Winter Campaign" was a plan for the increased use of guerrillas in place of regular forces during the opening phase of a military operation. Guerrillas will be used to attack outposts and to prepare the way for attacks by regular main force units. "General Directive 12" also stressed the necessity of having trenches and emplacements for artillery and for antiaircraft weapons completed by 16 October.

2 October 1966

I-3

25X1

13. According to MACV's Order of Battle, the Communist 620th Division with three subordinate regiments (total strength 5,600) is accepted as operating in the Quang Tin--Quang Nam area. In addition, the North Vietnamese Army 95 "B" Regiment (strength 2,000) is accepted as operating in southern Thua Thien Province near the Quang Nam border.

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14. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] a Viet Cong colonel on 29 September told a meeting of young recruits that Communist China will send one division to South Vietnam in early November 1966. If the Viet Cong officer made such a statement, it was undoubtedly to encourage the recruits to believe that the Vietnamese Communists are not facing the US alone. There is no evidence to indicate that Peking has any intention of sending combat troops to South Vietnam in November or any time in the near future.

2 October 1966

I-4

25X1

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. In working sessions on 30 September and 1 October, the Constituent Assembly generally avoided adoption of any controversial measures affecting its relations with the government. At the same time, however, there was a tendency in the assembly to diverge somewhat from its sole legal function of drafting a constitution.

2. Three subcommittees were created. Two of these on rules and credentials, are in accordance with the Constituent Assembly decree law, which provides that procedural rules must be adopted and that the credentials of at least two thirds of the deputies be certified before the election of assembly officers and other business can be conducted. A 25-man credentials committee was chosen by lot on 30 September. Some 23 deputies whose seats are being contested were barred from membership on the committee. The courts have already convicted two deputies of election irregularities, and unless the decision is overruled on appeal, their election will be invalidated.

3. The 15-man rules committee was elected by the assembly during the afternoon session on 30 September. Although the more prominent deputies did not contest seats on this committee, the election did serve to some extent as an initial test of regional and bloc loyalties.

4. The third subcommittee created by the assembly will deal with the question of relief for flood victims in the delta region, and represents the assembly's determination to concern itself with issues not directly related with constitution drafting. Another similar measure taken by the assembly was the adoption of a resolution urging the government to release political prisoners now under detention. Although the question of political prisoners is complex and delicate, an attempt to avoid controversy with the government was made in the wording of the

2 October 1966

II-1

25X1

resolution, which left to the government the decision as to which individuals and groups merited amnesty. The US Embassy has commented that the government, which is working on this question in various ways, may well have given prior approval for the resolution.

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Village Elections

6. Nguyen Van Tuong, the government's commissioner for administrative affairs, told newsmen on 1 October that plans are being made to hold elections for village councils and hamlet chiefs in government-controlled areas between February and March of next year. Between 700 and 800 of the country's 2,550 villages will probably be affected. At present, both hamlet and village leaders are appointed by the province chief. After the elections, the elected village council would have new legislative powers and would choose their village chiefs.

25X1

2 October 1966

II-2

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8.

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] an extraordinary congress of the Unified Buddhist Association would definitely be held on 21 October. The congress will determine future Buddhist policy towards the government and attempt to settle the current impasse between moderate and militant elements of the Buddhist Institute. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

2 October 1966

U-3

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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. A North Vietnamese merchant ship [redacted] attempt to pass itself off as a French merchantman. On 19 September a ship which identified itself as the Roland and which used a callsign included in the international callsign block allocated to France, passed two messages--one in English [redacted] -to the Vietnamese Ocean Shipping Agency (VOSA) in Haiphong. [redacted]

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2 October 1966

III-1

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

2 October 1966

IV-1

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. North Vietnam is continuing its propaganda drum beat against the upcoming Manila conference. Hanoi's party daily on 1 October charged that the "first and main purpose" of the Manila conference is "to push ahead the US aggressive war in Vietnam." The party daily also included the familiar theme that the Manila conference only demonstrates that despite the "heavy defeats" suffered by the US in Vietnam, it "still refuses to give up its "bloody gamble and is proposing new war ventures." The article concluded with the usual prediction of ultimate Communist victory.

25X1

2 October 1966

V-1



DRV-Czech Communiqué

8. The joint communiqué issued 1 October as a result of the 23 to 29 September visit of a Czech party and government delegation to Hanoi contained no hint of any change in the DRV attitude toward the war. It reaffirmed, in explicit language, Czech support for Hanoi's adamant stand on a political settlement.

3 October 1966

V-2

9. The Czech delegation, headed by party presidium member and Premier Jozef Lenart, also signed "appropriate" agreements for continued Czech aid to the DRV for both economic and military purposes. The Czech delegation reaffirmed as well the pledge made at the July 1966 Warsaw Pact meeting in Bucharest to allow Czech volunteers to come to Vietnam, "if requested" to do so by Hanoi.

10. The DRV accepted an invitation by the Czechs to send a friendship delegation to Prague. The date of this trip is to be agreed upon "in due course."

Hanoi-Peking Relations

11. The visit by a top-level Czech delegation is the latest in a series of efforts by both Moscow and Hanoi since the overthrow of Khrushchev to firm up their relations. Hanoi has moved quickly, however, to demonstrate that the visit by the Czech delegation did not signal any change in its basic policy of balancing its relations between Peking and Moscow. On the occasion of Communist China's National Day, 1 October, virtually the entire North Vietnamese politburo attended a reception in Hanoi at the Chinese ambassador's residence. The impressive North Vietnamese turnout was led by Ho Chi Minh and included the party first secretary Le Duan, Premier Pham Van Dong and Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap, among others. Premier Pham Van Dong's speech at the reception stressed the close relations between the two countries and praised the "all-sided" support provided North Vietnam by Peking.

12. The most pro-Chinese member of the North Vietnamese politburo, General Nguyen Chi Thanh, did not appear at the Chinese ambassador's reception in Hanoi--he is reported to be in South Vietnam directing the war effort. He did manage, however to give voice indirectly to his great admiration for Peking. The Viet Cong magazine, Liberation Troops, written by Thanh's staff, published an editorial greeting the Chinese anniversary enthusiastically. The editorial stated that "the Vietnamese people in general

2 October 1966

V-3

and the South Vietnamese people in particular" are "deeply grateful" for the lessons passed on to them by the Chinese, "especially concerning the revolutionary spirit of resisting the imperialists and feudalists to the end."

13. Thanh recently authored an article charging that certain unnamed Vietnamese Communist leaders had favored reverting to a more defensive military posture in the face of the US combat buildup in South Vietnam. Thanh undoubtedly shares the Chinese Communist attitude that only continued offensive military pressure against the US will enable Hanoi to achieve its goal of ultimate control over all of Vietnam.

14. Chinese Communist comment on Vietnam during National Day ceremonies merely rehashed familiar themes. Defense Minister Lin Piao devoted relatively little attention to Vietnam during his major address at National Day festivities in Peking, reaffirming Chinese Communist support for Hanoi in standard terms.

2 October 1966

V-4

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